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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 9th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 13 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Acharya ..... (Nepal)
later: Ms. Bolaños Perez (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Guatemala)

Contents

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*)

Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.4/61/L.5, submitted under item 39 on the Question of Western Sahara

1. **The Chairman** said that despite his best efforts to lead the parties to a consensus on the draft resolution, no consensus had been reached. He announced that Belize, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Nauru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Uruguay had become sponsors to the draft resolution.

2. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors, said that the text was very similar to that of General Assembly resolution 60/114, and he hoped the Committee could adopt it without a vote.

3. **Mr. Sahel** (Morocco), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that his delegation had taken up negotiations with the delegation of Algeria in an effort to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution. It had made a number of proposals to Algeria's draft resolution, many of which had been rejected. After further consultations agreement had been reached, but the very next day his delegation had been surprised to learn that the Algerian delegation had made changes to the agreement. His delegation had submitted new proposals but they had been rejected. It was therefore Algeria which was responsible for forcing a vote on the draft resolution. By abstaining in the vote, members of the Committee would be reaffirming their conviction that the only way to reach a lasting mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute was through a consensual approach supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy.

4. **Mr. Pereyra** (Peru) said that his delegation had historically supported a diplomatically negotiated, mutually acceptable political solution for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara and it would vote in favour of the draft resolution. However, its vote should not be viewed as reflecting its position in the Security Council, which continued to discuss the issue.

5. **Mr. Andereya** (Chile), expressed regret that no consensus had been achieved, adding that his delegation would support the draft resolution as the most recent compromise.

6. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that his delegation regretted that the Committee was being forced to vote on the draft resolution. He noted that the latter did not fully take into account the concerns of the Secretary-General or his Personal Envoy, in particular with regard to the need to continue the dialogue between the parties. Moreover, the tenth preambular paragraph referred to the settlement plan, which could not be implemented. Limiting parties to obsolete initiatives should be avoided. His delegation would therefore abstain.

7. **Ms. Lintonen** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed deep regret at the fact that, despite its urgings to the two parties, it had not been possible to reach consensus on the draft resolution.

8. **Mr. Sow** (Guinea), said that his delegation regretted that no consensus had been reached and added that his delegation would abstain.

9. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Korea, Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Lao (People's Democratic Republic of), Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Malawi, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Andorra, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Brazil, Brunei Darussalem, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, France, Gabon, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Federated States of Micronesia, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Oman, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Thailand, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United States, Yemen.

10. *Draft resolution A/C.4/61/L.5 was adopted by 76 votes to none, with 72 abstentions.*

11. **Ms. Fawcett** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation regretted that it had not been possible to reach consensus and urged the parties to engage constructively with the United Nations process. Her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution, since the latter was very similar to the draft resolution adopted in 2005.

12. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil) expressed regret that it had proved impossible to reach consensus and said that his delegation had abstained. He urged the Secretary-General to renew his efforts to arrive at a mutually agreed solution.

13. **Mr. Cato** (Philippines) said that his delegation had hoped it would be possible to reach consensus and when that hope had proved vain it had opted to abstain.

14. **Ms. Bolaños Perez** (Guatemala) said her delegation regretted that no consensus had been achieved. It supported the peace plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara but noted that all parties should agree to the plan. While her delegation had opted to abstain, its vote should not be construed as indicating support for one side over the other, but as a reflection a desire to maintain a balance in the work of the United Nations.

15. **Mr. Naywin** (Myanmar) said that his delegation regretted that the draft resolution had had to be put to the vote. It strongly believed in the right of peoples to self-determination and had voted in favour of the draft resolution. He expressed the hope that the parties would continue to cooperate with the United Nations in pursuit of a just and lasting political solution.

16. **Mr. Sitnikov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had contributed to the efforts to reach a consensus and regretted that no consensus had been achieved. It had voted in favour of the draft resolution because of its unchanging position of principle with respect to Western Sahara. There was no alternative to a just, lasting, mutually acceptable resolution, guided by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy and based on Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

17. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan), while regretting that no consensus had been reached, said that the draft resolution could have been improved upon and his delegation had therefore abstained in the vote.

18. **Mr. Martins** (Portugal) said that his delegation regretted that it had not been possible to reach consensus. It had abstained because it deplored the fact that a vote had been necessary. Its abstention was not to be interpreted as support for one party over the other.

19. **Ms. Strōm** (Sweden) said that her delegation regretted that the resolution had not been adopted by consensus. It had voted in favour of the draft resolution but that did not mean that it had taken a side in the conflict.

20. **Mr. Spatafora** (Italy) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because it was identical to the one that had been adopted in 2005. His delegation was particularly concerned by the effects of the lack of agreement on the civilian population and it called on all parties to renew their efforts to find an appropriate agreement.

21. **Mr. Palouš** (Czech Republic) said that his delegation regretted the lack of consensus and had abstained. However, that did not signify that it was taking a particular position.

22. **Ms. Papadopoulou** (Greece) said that the lack of consensus was regrettable. Her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution and it supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal

Envoy. Solutions could not be imposed; they required the full agreement of all parties concerned.

23. **Mr. Nazri** (Malaysia) expressed the hope that a peaceful, negotiated settlement could be found. His delegation did not favour either party and it had abstained.

24. **Mr. Kenes** (Belgium) said that his delegation regretted the lack of consensus and wished to assist in finding a peaceful solution to the dispute. It had voted in favour of the draft resolution in order to maintain its neutrality.

25. **Mr. McDonald** (Ireland) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because the latter reaffirmed the right of the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination. He regretted the lack of consensus.

26. **Mr. Elsherbini** (Egypt) said that his delegation had abstained because of the lack of consensus. Cooperation, dialogue and a fair solution were needed to maintain good relations in the Maghreb.

27. **Ms. Kuvshynnykova** (Ukraine) said that a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations was required to allow the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination. Her delegation regretted the lack of consensus and believed that the parties could have made greater efforts to reach a consensus. It had abstained but that did not represent a particular position.

28. **Ms. Mladineo** (Croatia) said that the lack of consensus was regrettable. Her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because the latter resembled the one that had been adopted by consensus at the previous session.

29. **Mr. Agha** (Slovakia) said that his delegation had believed that a consensus was possible and it had voted in favour of the draft resolution because that resolution contained the basic principle of self-determination. However, that did not mean that his Government had taken a particular position. It was committed to finding a negotiated settlement that took into account the views of the Saharan people.

30. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand) said that his delegation had abstained because it had wanted the Committee to reach a consensus. It remained committed to supporting the role of the United Nations in finding a solution to the question of Western Sahara.

31. **Ms. Graham** (New Zealand) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution. Her Government regretted the lack of consensus and believed that it was important to ensure that the Saharan people were aware of the international community's determination to allow them to exercise their right to self-determination.

32. **Mr. Wandel** (Denmark) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the resolution but that did not mean it was stating a particular position. His Government regretted the lack of consensus and believed that a mutually acceptable solution should be found by means of dialogue.

33. **Mr. Mana** (Cameroon) said that his delegation regretted the lack of consensus and had abstained.

34. **Mr. Bowman** (Canada) said that while his delegation had abstained that did not mean that it was expressing a particular position. His Government regretted that the parties had not made a greater effort to reach a consensus.

35. **Mr. Landemoen** (Norway), speaking also on behalf of Iceland, said that his Government regretted the lack of consensus. His delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution but in so doing had not meant to express a particular position.

36. **Ms. Peksa** (Poland) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution but that did not mean that it had wished to indicate a particular position. It regretted the lack of consensus and believed that the only way to find a solution was for all parties concerned to engage in constructive dialogue.

37. **Mr. Panggabean** (Indonesia) expressed regret at the lack of consensus and reiterated that the only way to find a viable solution was through dialogue and international cooperation. His delegation had abstained but that should not necessarily be seen as reflecting a particular position.

38. **Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo** (Spain) said that the lack of consensus was particularly regrettable because it had been possible to reach agreement in 2005. His delegation had abstained because it had wanted to send a message that renewed effort and vision were required to find a mutually acceptable political solution.

39. **Ms. Tomic** (Slovenia) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because the latter had been based on the 2005 resolution, which had been adopted by consensus.

40. **Mr. Wegter** (Netherlands) said that the lack of consensus was regrettable and was not helpful. His delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution and had wished to maintain an impartial position. His Government called on all parties to make renewed efforts to find a solution.

41. **Ms. Román González** (Paraguay) said that her delegation had abstained but it still believed in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 1540 (XV).

42. **Ms. Abraham Nagyi** (Hungary) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because the latter was based on the principle of self-determination; that did not mean that it was taking a particular position.

43. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that it was regrettable that it had not been possible to adopt the draft resolution without a vote. Furthermore, it was regrettable that Morocco had not voted in favour of the draft resolution; in 2005 Morocco had voted in favour of a resolution that had been identical. The resolution just adopted represented a victory for the Saharan people in their struggle against the Moroccan occupation. It was particularly welcome given that the Saharan people were being harshly repressed by the occupying Moroccan forces. That was not generally known because press agencies and observers had been denied access to the Territory.

44. **Mr. Sahel** (Morocco) noted that, once again, Algeria had sought to divide the international community by insisting on a vote on the draft resolution, despite all the efforts made to achieve consensus. Algeria's stance showed the extent to which the issue was a bilateral and regional one. The result of the vote was by no means a "victory" for Algeria: as many countries had explained, their principle aim had been to encourage negotiations leading to a political solution acceptable to all parties. Algeria was in no position to lecture Morocco on morality, given that it had refused access by the Identification Commission to the camps in Tindouf. It was time for Algeria to see reason and recognize Morocco's right to its territorial integrity.

Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/61/20 and Corr.1)

45. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that the importance of space-based disaster management had become abundantly clear in the wake of a series of natural disasters over recent years, including the devastating earthquake that had struck Pakistan in October 2005. Satellite remote sensing and a geographical information system (GIS) had been used for the speedy mapping of the stricken areas, thus assisting the rescue and relief operations. The establishment of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) would take the process a step further.

46. The continued prosperity and welfare of nations hinged on the use of space technologies. It was therefore crucial to prevent an arms race in outer space. Insistence by States with major space capabilities on incorporating the use of outer space in their military doctrines put the security of all humanity at risk. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) had a role to play in that regard, alongside the Conference on Disarmament, and the two bodies should strengthen their working relationship and their channels of communication. His delegation supported the recent Canadian proposal to enhance the dialogue between the various bodies engaged in outer-space activities, including the Conference, COPUOS, the International Telecommunication Union and the General Assembly. Work should also commence on strengthening the international legal framework on activity in outer space. Further legal norms should be considered, on the basis of the work of COPUOS.

47. The projects undertaken by Pakistan using space sciences and technology included the gift of two transponders on Pakistan's communications satellite, Paksat-1, to the Virtual University. The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) had initiated a very small aperture terminal (VSAT)-based telemedicine pilot project, using Paksat-1 transponder bandwidth, to provide health-care and telemedical facilities to people in rural areas. Satellite remote sensing data had been used for cotton crop estimation in a pilot project of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, in collaboration with SUPARCO. Results had been encouraging and the project had been expanded to include the wheat crop. SUPARCO had also undertaken a number of

programmes relating to natural resource management, environmental surveying, satellite meteorology and atmospheric pollution monitoring. Recent projects included aquaculture development in coastal areas; assessment of mangrove forests along the coast; launch of vehicle-tracking and fleet-management services; baseline survey of flood-plain areas; and study of impact of global warming on water resources. The Government had also approved the launching of a communications satellite in 2009 and two remote sensing satellites.

48. *Ms. Bolaños-Perez (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

49. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that recent natural disasters had underscored the importance of space science and technology for disaster management and a better understanding of climate change. ASEAN members looked forward to further cooperation with United Nations agencies to enhance regional capacity in applying space science and technology to disaster management and sustainable development, with particular emphasis on tele-education and telemedicine, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, conservation of the environment and protection of the cultural heritage. In Thailand, for example, the Distance Learning Foundation conducted live remote-education broadcasting via satellite throughout the country and to Thai communities around the world. ASEAN members also looked forward to cooperation with national and international space-related institutions in other regions.

50. ASEAN expressed its appreciation of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications for its initiatives in developing countries, including its sponsorship of a project to map tsunami-affected coastal aquaculture areas in Northern Sumatra using high-resolution satellite imagery. It also welcomed the new disaster-management initiative, the Sentinel-Asia project.

51. With US$ 10 million seed money contributed by the Thai Government, the Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, administered by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, would help finance capacity-building in the network of national and regional centres with a view to transmitting tsunami warnings across the region in real time.

52. The ASEAN Subcommittee on Space Technology and Applications (SCOSA) had recently conducted a workshop on disaster mitigation using remote sensing and GIS. It had sent a mission to India which had identified various areas of collaboration. Other projects in the pipeline included one on the application of remote sensing to water resources management and one on capacity-building of educational institutions for enhanced promotion of space technology.

53. COPUOS was an important international forum, whose work should be harmonized with that of other international and regional forums, including the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

54. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan) said that Japan had launched H-IIA and M-V launch vehicles in February and September. The latter were among the best solid propellant launch vehicles in the world. Japan had also contributed an experiment module Kibo, for use by the International Space Station to conduct experiments and research in outer space. A Japanese astronaut had contributed significantly to the work of the mission of the space shuttle Discovery.

55. Recent achievements included the successful landing of the Hayabusa spacecraft on the asteroid Itokawa and the successful launching of the X-ray astronomy satellite Suzaku, the infrared astronomy satellite Akari and the solar physics satellite Hinode.

56. Japan cooperated closely with space organizations on various aspects of Earth observation. It also hosted the yearly meeting of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum. At the twelfth session of the Forum, space and disaster management organizations in the Asia-Pacific region had agreed to collaborate; they had since launched the Sentinel-Asia project, which shared information on disasters. A total of 51 agencies from 18 countries and 7 international organizations, were already involved in the project. The theme of the thirteenth session of the Forum, to be held in Jakarta in December 2006, would be "Work together, building a secure and prosperous society".

57. Japan had recently put into orbit the advanced land observation satellite Daichi; the latter had already monitored a landslide on the island of Leyte in the

Philippines, the eruption of the volcano Merapi and an earthquake in Java and flooding in northern Thailand.

58. Japan continued to work for the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) and had developed its own space debris mitigation standard, which had been presented to the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee.

59. **Mr. Abdalhaleem** (Sudan) said the applications of space technology had strengthened the ability of mankind to deal with threats to human life and to attain development goals. Like other developing countries, Sudan looked to benefit from such advanced technology in the areas of sustainable development, disaster prevention and rapid response to emergencies. His delegation hailed the efforts of COPUOS to implement the recommendations of the UNISPACE III and commended the study presented by the ad hoc expert group on the creation of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER). SPIDER should be linked directly to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UN-OOSA) and should work towards increasing the disaster management capacities of relevant agencies, particularly in developing countries. His Government was concerned at the devastating consequences of natural disasters and was prepared to do its utmost to support international efforts to minimize their impact.

60. Sudan supported the Committee's recommendations for greater transparency in the space activities being undertaken by various States. It was imperative to ensure that outer space was used for peaceful purposes only. Work also should continue on finding a voluntary solution to the problem of space debris as well as on legislation aimed at mitigating such debris.

61. **Mr. Bahk** (Republic of Korea) said that space science and technology was playing a greater role in daily life than ever before. Greater access to space-based services was needed in order to enhance coordination and cooperation for disaster management and emergency response. His country welcomed the proposal of COPUOS to establish the SPIDER platform.

62. Since 1999, the Republic of Korea had launched two of its own satellites and was planning to launch another three by 2009. Those satellites would be used to carry out environmental, agricultural and oceanic monitoring as well as to preserve marine resources around the Korean Peninsula and across East Asia. In addition to those technological developments, efforts to establish an institutional environment conducive to technological development had continued. With the enactment in November 2005 of the National Space Law, the Republic of Korea would be better able to implement United Nations outer space treaties and coordinate and promote the outer space activities of both governmental and non-governmental entities.

63. **Mr. Goldnick** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said outer space should be decreed as part of the common heritage of mankind so as to prevent its use from being restricted to a few countries which would obtain unilateral benefits from its use. It was important to promote a legal instrument for the establishment of an international regime that would assure equal access to the scientific and technological benefits derived from the peaceful use of outer space. The United Nations and COPUOS both had a fundamental role to play in the achievement of those goals.

64. Geostationary orbit should be regarded as a limited natural resource and should therefore be used on the basis of the principle of rational and equitable access for all countries, bearing in mind the needs and interests of developing countries. Venezuela strictly upheld principles that fostered the peaceful use of outer space. In that regard it had concluded a cooperation agreement with the People's Republic of China on the peaceful use of outer space which provided for Venezuela's acquisition of the Simón Bolívar satellite and the establishment of a space centre. A draft law which would provide for the establishment and operation of the Bolivarian Space Agency had just received a second reading in the Venezuelan National Assembly. Those developments illustrated the importance that Venezuela attached to the use of outer space for peace, unity and development.

65. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said his country fully supported the work of COPUOS as it strived to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The Committee was an important forum for the exchange of ideas on international collaboration in space science and technology for improving the welfare of mankind. The recommendation of the General Assembly that avenues be explored for the use

of space technology in implementation of the recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development testified to the link between the benefits derived from the use of space technology, on the one hand, and economic growth and sustainable development, particularly in developing countries, on the other.

66. Outer space should never be used for military purposes. His delegation called for the creation of effective mechanisms to prevent any such development and endorsed the recommendation for greater transparency in the space activities being undertaken by various States.

67. It noted with keen interest the emphasis that had been placed on disaster management, particularly the establishment of the SPIDER platform. His country was all too familiar with the devastating impact of hurricanes and would closely follow the work of the Committee on the application of space technology in the area of disaster management. Other potential benefits of space technology to developing countries ranged from tele-education and telemedicine to management of water resources and the improvement of public health services.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.